



Is a healthy diet an environmentally sustainable diet?

Author(s): Macdiarmid JI
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Abstract:

The concept of a healthy and environmentally sustainable diet is not new, but with increasing concern about future global food security and climate change there is a renewed interest in this topic. Dietary intakes in UK accounts for approximately 20-30% of total annual greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE), with the greatest contributions coming from high intakes of meat and dairy products. Dietary proposals to help mitigate climate change (i.e. reduce GHGE) have focused on reducing consumption of meat and dairy products, but this must be considered in the context of the whole diet, alongside any possible nutritional consequences for health. Bringing together health and environmental impact of the diet raises the question of whether a healthy diet can also be an environmentally sustainable diet. While recent research showed that it is possible to achieve a realistic diet that meets dietary requirement for health and has lower GHGE, it cannot be assumed that a healthy diet will always have lower GHGE. With different combinations of food it is possible to consume a diet that meets dietary requirements for health, but has high GHGE. It is important to understand what constitutes a sustainable diet, but this then needs to be communicated effectively to try and change well-established dietary intakes of the population. Studies show that understanding of sustainable diets is poor and there are many misconceptions (e.g. the overestimation of the protein requirements for a healthy diet), which could contribute to the barriers towards changing dietary intakes.

Source: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s0029665112002893>

Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Food/Water Security, Unspecified Exposure

Food/Water Security: Food Access/Distribution

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified, Non-United States

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Non-United States: Europe

European Region/Country: European Country

Other European Country : UK

Health Co-Benefit/Co-Harm (Adaption/Mitigation): ☐

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to reduce or cope with greenhouse gases

A focus of content

Health Impact: ☐

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

Mitigation/Adaptation: ☐

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Mitigation

Resource Type: ☐

format or standard characteristic of resource

Review

Timescale: ☐

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified